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COLOMBIA: **Military on Defensive** [redacted]

Recent guerrilla attacks across the nation—in which nearly 100 soldiers have died and more than 60 have been captured—have forced the military into a defensive posture and raised public doubts about its ability to defeat the insurgency, according to [redacted] press reports. Faced with the high casualties and growing criticism of its performance, the military has strengthened security around potential targets, worked to improve intelligence collection, and increased combat patrolling.

— ***Although these efforts have resulted in several victories over small guerrilla forces, shortfalls in intelligence, communications, and mobility appear to have blunted the Army's response.*** [redacted]

Army Commander Bedoya, long aware of the deficiencies, has pressed publicly for badly needed equipment as well as for legislation to give the armed forces more authority to deal with security threats.

— Last week, President Samper urged the nation to support a "war bond" proposal, which is expected to add $400 million to the armed forces' coffers. Colombia's financial groups oppose the proposal.

— Six draft bills to enhance military legal powers were recently introduced in the Senate, where they were endorsed by 40 of 102 senators. The bills face an uphill battle, however, because several congressmen, the Prosecutor General, and members of the judiciary claim that they would lead to increased human rights violations and decreased civilian control over the armed forces.

[redacted]